

Testimony of

Alyssa Domini

Stamford Educator

Before the

Education Committee

March 15, 2023

Good afternoon, Senator McCrory, Representative Currey, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty, and members of the Education Committee.

I testify today in support of House Bill 6884. This bill takes important steps toward addressing the educator shortage in Connecticut, showing educators that theirs is a respected profession, and ensuring that our classrooms and schools can provide the best possible education for our students.

It is not secret that increasing numbers of students and decreasing numbers of teachers are harming our school systems, and the futures of our students. Overcrowding in classrooms can really only be fixed by one thing, and that thing is the hiring of new, passionate, and qualified educators to create more classes and allow districts to spread out their students so that an optimal student to teacher ratio may be achieved.

So hire more teachers. Sounds easy enough, right? But of course, it's not, because with the salaries that are offered now and the conditions that we work in, the only benefit to becoming a teacher at this point is summers off, and that benefit is rapidly becoming not enough, because I don't know any new teacher who makes enough money that they don't have to work during their 'summers off' anyway.

One way that we can attract more qualified and genuine professionals into this field is to offer a competitive salary that makes the stress of this job worth it. To be clear, the stress of this job will not just vanish because of an increase in salary, however one benefit of being paid a salary that is actually competitive, is that I would be able to quit at least one of my four jobs if my salary went up, and therefore decrease my stress levels outside of school, and actually free up some of my time for much needed self-care. Meaningful self-care for myself means that I will have more to pour into my students from my own cup, if I am well rested and ready to go at the start of every school day, rather than tired and burnt out from working so much after school. I

don't know one teacher who does not have some sort of second job, because the salary for this one just does not cut it in the world that we are living in today.

As I look through the issues that will (hopefully) be addressing in this act, I can see that, while on the surface it may seem otherwise, they are all issues which are inextricably related. Overcrowded classrooms lead teachers to feel as if they cannot drop the reins as much and allow their students to engage in play. If we can recruit more teachers via a higher salary, we can lower our class sizes and allow for more imaginative play in a younger classroom setting. Play based learning is critical to the development of children and is often times a good predictor of later success in school. Organized, purposeful play can change how a child views school, and is crucial to getting them to enjoy school and want to show up every day. All of these things play into one another, and we can only begin to take the steps to move forward by investing further in our educators, and by extension, our students.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

